

2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

ArtsGram

October 18-24, 2010 in La Crosse, Wis., by the Tomah VA Medical Center

Hosted by the Department of veterans Affairs, the American Legion
Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

It's More Fun When There's More Than Just One!

by Jenny Ballou, VA Public Affairs Staff

For centuries musical groups have performed before audiences of paupers and royalty, in a full span of genres. The groups who are performing at this year's Festival are equally as awesome in all aspects of performance. The four groups participating in the 2010 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival here in beautiful La Crosse, Wis., represent the best!

All the way from VA Healthcare System in Anchorage, Alaska, is Ron McCampbell and Johnathan Starks, otherwise known as, "R-N-J." These first timers will sing a duet of their signature song, "Nightshift." The two met under unique circumstances; they were singing in church and then began singing karaoke in American Legion and VFW posts. "Our first thoughts were that maybe if we practiced hard, we could win and go to the Festival one year," said Starks. That initial thought became a reality when they received their invitation.

Also performing is a group calling themselves, "Michael Brooks and Marc Hansen." Although they've known each other for a long time and Marc has performed with others at the Festival, these two are performing together for the third time. Representing the VA Healthcare System in Miami, Brooks and Hansen are performing their own rendition of an all-time favorite, "All for the Best." Sure to be another highlight of the Stage Show, they may just bring the house down!

Returning this year at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival after many appearances are the wildly popular, “The Salty Dogs” featuring Stu Carlson, Art Lee, Blaine Lund, John Prather, Ray Ross, George Simmons and Gaylen Young, singing “Blow the Man Down,” in the Stage Show. As always, they are sure to be a big hit.

And back for the third time are John Jordan and Rick Stang. Stang has performed over the years with a number of different artists and joined with Jordan, who is his friend of more than 18 years, for this year’s Festival. When asked what their selection means to them, Stang said, “really it’s about not putting a value on things.” He is often on the road performing for Veterans groups and at special appearances in support of the National Veterans Rehabilitation Events.

Watch for these amazingly talented Veterans in the Gala Stage Show from 2- 5 p.m. on Sunday at the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center.

Of Special Interest Today

* Artists take a trip to Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center and Skumrud Heritage Farm. Buses load at 9 a.m. Lunch will be served at the center.

* Artists and Performers, a Creative Writing Workshop on Story Telling with Sara Slayton will be held in the Radisson Art Center Building from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Stop by to learn the tradition of storytelling and get tips on how to learn and tell stories, a demonstration of stories to use in your work, and a discussion of the benefits of storytelling.

* Military Combat Experience entries from the 2010 national art competition will be presented in Radisson Art Center Building from 7:30 - 9 p.m. This is a must-see experience for all!

First Timers Look Forward to “Creative” Week

by Sandy Franks, Public Affairs Officer, Shreveport VA Medical Center

Excited, happy, amazed, impressed and a little nervous. These are some of the comments from first-time participants at the 2010 Creative Arts Festival.

Carl Anderson, a Marine Corps Veteran who served in Vietnam, is excited to have been selected to attend this year's festival. This is his first time to compete and he was surprised when he received the invitation to attend the Festival. Anderson, who lives in Prescott, Ariz., is presenting a mosaic pixel art portrait of his granddaughter.

Charles Watkins, an Air Force Veteran, learned about the Festival from a friend and decided to enter the competition. Charles, who believes his maternal grandmother was American Indian, possibly Blackfoot, has a strong interest in Native American history. His entry for the Creative Arts Festival is a pencil drawing entitled Medicine Pipe Carrier.

A Navy Veteran, Teresa Deible is awestruck by the Creative Arts Festival and is amazed that the VA has this kind of event for Veterans. After leaving the military for medical reasons, Teresa returned to school to study art therapy but eventually decided she wanted to do something else. She was still having health problems and thought a pottery class would help her relax. That decision led her to start her own business, "Clayful Expressions." She found out about the Creative Arts Festival through her VA Medical Center at Bedford, Mass., and decided to enter.

Lake Charles, La., native Joshua Moreaux served the Air Force from 1995 to 2006 and was a member of "Tops in Blue" Air Force traveling stage show.

Currently attending college in Bedford, Mass., he continues to perform with a group who entertain at weddings and corporate events. He is very impressed at all of the effort to make this event so special and is looking forward to performing with other Veterans and making new friends.

Gordon Schmidt, a Vietnam Veteran is a woodworker and clock maker. His entry in this year's Creative Arts Festival is a windmill clock. Schmidt, who has competed at the local level for seven years is happy to finally come to the Creative Arts Festival. He enjoys giving his clocks to others and

donates one clock each year to a local animal shelter to raise money for animal welfare.

Wisconsin Series:

Historic Downtown La Crosse

by James Theres, Public Affairs Officer, Tomah VA Medical Center

Nestled alongside the Mighty Mississippi River, surrounded by towering bluffs, and offering the best of history, scenery, and modern commerce, Historic Downtown La Crosse, just a few steps from Riverside Park, is one of the largest commercial historic districts in the state. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the district boasts 110 buildings, of which 96 contribute to the historic character of the district, ranging from 1866 Victorian through 1940 Art Deco.

If antique shopping is your thing, then Historic Downtown La Crosse is a shoppers paradise with plenty of unique and specialty shops from Old Towne North on La Crosse's Northside to Shelby Mall on La Crosse's Southside with many stops in between. Once you finished shopping you will be ready for dinner at one of the award winning restaurants. Cajun—check out Buzzard Billy's. Nostalgic atmosphere—1940s style Digger's Sting fits the bill. Steaks, seafood or prime rib—the Freighthouse isn't far from your hotel room. From pubs and grills to good old fashioned bar food to sit down restaurants, Historic Downtown La Crosse has an answer to feed your inner foodie.

The area is also a haven for outdoor enthusiasts with such activities as fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, snowboarding, downhill and cross country skiing, golfing, swimming and walking tours. Throughout the year, near Downtown Historic La Crosse, there are plenty of Festivals including La Crosse's own Riverfest, Oktoberfest, Weinerfest, Mardi Gras, Winter Recfest and the La Crosse Marathon.

With a population of nearly 52,000 there is something for everyone in La Crosse. In 2002, Historic Downtown La Crosse received the prestigious “Great American Main Street” award and in 2009 US News ranked La Crosse, Wis., as the 6th best place to live in the country.

Fun Fact Question: Elected on April 1, 1856, what is the name of La Crosse’s first Mayor?

A: Thomas Benton Stoddard

The Artists Easel

Workshops on Rosemaling and Chip Carving Held Today

Today you will have the experience of learning two beautiful Norwegian art forms at The Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center and Skumrud Heritage Farm. The farm is a 43-acre property given to Norskedalen by Lloyd Thrune and his sister Ruth, in 1983. The log house, built by their grandfather Nels Skumrud in 1853, is considered to be the oldest surviving house in the area.

The property is a historic open-air museum owned and operated by Norskedalen as a museum and cultural center for classes and events. It has eleven restored pioneer log buildings nestled in a picturesque valley with a creek and croplands surrounded by forested hills.

Rosemaling is a form of decorative flower painting that developed in rural areas of Norway during the late 18th century. Then as now, the hand-painted were used to embellish home furnishings and accessories. They were especially popular for wooden tables and chairs, storage trunks, ceilings, and walls.

Chip carving uses triangular shaped cuts that create intricate and intriguing designs dancing across the surface of the wood. Patterns for chip carving are defined by a few basic elements, as the triangle or free form line, yet by varying the size and position of these elements new patterns are created.

Enjoy your workshops and the picturesque historic Norwegian Skumsrud Heritage Farm. You are sure to learn the beautiful art forms, but also appreciate the history behind the art.

The Performers Podium

How to get the most out of rehearsals, from the Music and Show Directors

Getting the most out of your rehearsal time and effort:

Show up to rehearsals on time. On-time arrival is of tremendous benefit and importance to everyone and shows that you are respectful of others and serious about your commitment to a successful performance.

Rehearsal is for maximizing everyone's performance. The lyrics and music should have been learned prior to the Festival and the rehearsals this week focus primarily on fine-tuning.

Pay close attention to what the music director is teaching you during rehearsals. He is the experienced professional and is the last word on musical aspects of the performance.

Listen carefully to instructions and tips given by the show and music directors, as well as the chorus leaders. Do not talk or socialize while they are leading rehearsals.

Rehearsing is all about "getting good." It can be very exciting, but it can also be tedious and tiring. Think about your individual needs for rest, exercise, etc., and give yourself the best opportunity to have a trouble-free, uplifting week at the Festival. Working together with a bunch of people toward a common goal is one of life's most satisfying experiences.

Artists Interaction Session a Success

by James Therese, Public Affairs Officer, Tomah VA Medical Center

Since 1997, the artist interaction session of the National Veterans Creative

Arts Festival has offered an important insight into the mind of each artist. “We held the first one at the Pump House,” said Tomah VA Voluntary Services Coordinator Laura Bishop. “It was much more informal.” Today, the gold-medal winning creative artists have an opportunity to stand up in front of their peers and explain in detail the genesis of their inspiration. Some artwork, like that of Vietnam Veteran James Lykins whose piece “Green Faces, Purple Heart,” took 20 years to come to fruition. Another Veteran Charles Watkins earned his Gold medal after only his first crack at drawing with a charcoal pencil. And sadly, Veteran Phil Swan, who was scheduled to attend his first Creative Arts Festival never had the chance to share his inspiration. He died on Aug. 1 of this year. “Phil was very happy about coming to his first Festival,” said wife Desiree. “He was an amazing storyteller, goldsmith, sculptor and painter. When he got excited about something, it stayed with him until he got it done.” Desiree, and Phil’s sister Janene and oldest daughter, Rachel, will attend the Gala and Art Show on Sunday and stand by Phil’s award winning sculpture, “Hero.” (See his photo and artwork at right.)

The Therapeutic Arts Scholarship

— What’s it all about?

The Therapeutic Arts Scholarship is a more recent and unique opportunity for Veterans who enter the Creative Arts Competition.

During the local competition phase (January 1 – April 1), VA staff persons had the opportunity to nominate one Veteran from their facility for consideration to attend the Festival based on a therapeutic objective. A narrative explaining the therapeutic benefits that he or she will receive from attending the Festival must accompany the Veteran’s entry. The Veteran must be entered in at least one category in any of the five divisions. Nominations are open to first-time participants at the Festival but not necessarily first time participants in the creative arts competition.

A panel made up of national committee members review each of the nominations and select the individual who will benefit most from

participating in this year's Festival. The scholarship allows the recipients to participate in the Festival with all lodging and meal expenses paid.

Six scholarship recipients were selected this year - three visual artists and three performing artists. One of the Veterans from the visual arts division was unfortunately unable to make it to the Festival this week. The other visual arts scholarship recipients Kimberly Joan Friske from Albuquerque, N.M., and George Archibeque from Oakland, Calif., are attending the visual arts workshops and alternate activities. Alfredo Hurtado from Durham, N.C., Jack Tongen from Fayetteville, Ark., and John Koelsch from Salem, Va., are the scholarship recipients from the performing arts division and will be singing as chorus members in the stage show later this week. There were a total of seven nomination forms submitted in the visual arts category and five nomination forms submitted in the performing arts category.

We would like to congratulate the recipients of this years' Therapeutic Arts Scholarship and encourage all staff members to consider nominating a Veteran from your facility for the 2011 scholarships. As we all know the Festival provides great therapeutic benefit and rehabilitation for our Nation's heroes so be sure to take part in this great opportunity.

A Day at the Festival with Lonnie Hicks and Johnathan Starks

We have asked two of our Veterans (one an artist and the other a performer) to give us a daily update of their impressions and insights each day of the Festival. Today we read their thoughts about coming to the Festival.

Lonnie Hicks, Artist, Honolulu Hawaii

Yesterday was such a long day. My wife Yvonne and I flew out of Honolulu Sunday evening and arrived in La Crosse at 6:30 p.m. Monday evening - a total of 22 hours. When we arrived in Minneapolis we missed our final connecting flight because of wheelchair problems. I got on the next flight, but my wife was going to have to wait until Tuesday. Yvonne saw Jack and Laura, our team leaders, and asked them to watch over me. Thanks to their

intervention, Yvonne was placed on the flight with me. Once we got to the La Crosse Airport we were helped by the Challenge Cadets. The VA staff and Cadet Tyler went above and beyond to see that we were taken care of. Thank you! Today I am looking forward to telling my story. I brought a binder my wife put together that shows all the good things that have happened to me since I got involved in VA's arts and crafts program. I hope you got a chance to see it, if not, just ask!

Johnathan Starks, Performer, Anchorage, Alaska

I was surprised to hear one of the gentlemen on my team has been coming to the Festival since 1992. Already I know I want to come next year! That really gives me something to work toward for next year. I was so excited about all that is going on I couldn't sleep last night. I have crazy expectations for this week. I really enjoyed meeting my team last night and felt right at home. A lot of them were singers - two had even been members of the Drifters and will be the back-up singers for "Ron and John" when we sing in the show. It doesn't get any better than that. I have never sung with a live orchestra before either - there are a lot of firsts for me this week. I also plan to audition today. By the time this is in your hands I will know if I was selected for any of the parts I tried out for. A special thank you to Ron McCampbell, my partner. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him!

Things you need to know:

► The Hospitality Room, sponsored by the ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary, is open today from 10 a.m. - 11 p.m. in the Radisson Hotel, Mississippi Suite #823. Snacks will be served. Don't hesitate to stop by, as the only meal being served today is the Opening Banquet.

Today – 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Thursday – 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Friday – 9 a.m. - Midnight

Saturday – 9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Sunday – 10 a.m. - Noon, 10 p.m. - Midnight

► The Medical Room is located in the Iowa Room, second floor of the Radisson Hotel.

- Daily hours are: 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

- Use ext. 459 inside the Radisson Hotel, outside of the hotel please call (608) 784-6680 and ask for ext. 459.

- After 10 p.m. call room 214 for emergencies.

- During the Festival please let your team leader know of any medical concerns. They will help you.

- Medical personnel, wearing bright blue jackets, will accompany Veterans on all trips and tours.

► The Festival Internet Café is once again sponsored by HP and is located in the Radisson Hotel, Minnesota Room on the second floor.

Day	Times
Today	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; and 7 - 9 p.m.
Thursday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Friday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; and 7 - 9 p.m.
Saturday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sunday	7 - 8:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Thank you, HP, for providing this valuable service to our Festival Veterans.

NVCAF Web site: www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

Festival Menu

Wednesday Meal Times:

Breakfast

Artists and Performers —

7 - 8:30 a.m.

Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Lunch

Artists — 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m.

at Norskedalen

Performers — Noon - 1 p.m.

Raddison Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Dinner

Artists — 5:30 - 7 p.m.

Performers — 5:30 - 6:45 p.m.

Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Breakfast Buffet

Fluffy scrambled eggs with scallions; home-style fried potatoes; ham slices; cinnamon French toast with syrup; fresh seasonal fruit; assorted fresh baked goods; assorted cereals/oatmeal; assorted low-fat yogurts; assorted juices; coffee, herbal teas, milk

Lunch Buffet

Spring greens salad; Swedish meatballs; buttered egg noodles; mashed potatoes; snap peas and baby carrots; broccoli and cauliflower; artisan rolls; assorted cookies; coffee, hot tea, iced tea

Dinner Buffet

Spring greens salad; penne pasta salad; wheat berry salad; herb crumb baked Walleye with lemon butter sauce; grilled flank steak with wild mushroom sauce; fresh steamed vegetables; chef's choice potato or pasta; warm rolls; orange kiss cake; coffee, hot tea, iced tea

Today's Festival Schedule

Artists

Wednesday, October 20

Time	Event
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
7:45 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with Paula Moran – Minnesota Room, second floor, Radisson Hotel
8:00 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with artists
8:30 a.m.	Depart for trip to Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center and Skumrud Heritage Farm - Woodcarving & Rosemaling Workshops
9 a.m. – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open – Mississippi Suite #823
11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lunch at Norskedalen
1:15 p.m.	Workshops continue at Norskedalen & Skumrud Farm
3:30 p.m.	Buses depart for hotel
5:30 – 7 p.m.	Dinner – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Creative Writing Workshop - Story Telling with Sara Slayton Radisson Art Center Building
7:30 – 9 p.m.	Presentation of the Military Combat Experience entries (electronic images) from the 2010 national art competition – Radisson Art Center Building

Time	Event
9 - 10 p.m.	Caricaturists – Radisson Hotel Ballroom Foyer
9 – 11 p.m.	Karaoke - Radisson Ballroom, first floor Ice Cream in Hospitality Room
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor

Performers

Wednesday, October 20

Time	Event
7 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor Late Registration – Wisconsin I, Radisson Hotel, 1st floor
8 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with Amy Kimbler - Zielke Suite, second floor
8:30 a.m.	Team leader and team support meeting with performers
9 – 10 a.m.	Chorus member photos (wear white shirts and vests) – North Hall, La Crosse Center
9 – 11 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open – Mississippi Suite #823
9 – Noon	Rehearsals continue - North Hall, La Crosse Center
Noon – 1 p.m.	Lunch – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, 1st floor
1 – 5:30 p.m.	Show run-thru - ALL VETERANS NEEDED – North Hall, La Crosse Center Chorus vests/costume fittings – North Hall, La Crosse Center

Time	Event
5:30 – 6:45 p.m.	Dinner – Radisson Hotel Ballroom, first floor
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Creative Writing Workshop - Story Telling with Sara Slayton Radisson Art Center Building
7 – 9 p.m.	Rehearsals continue - North Hall, La Crosse Center
9 – 11 p.m.	Karaoke - Radisson Ballroom, first floor Ice Cream in Hospitality Room

Artists and Performers:

Please check with your team leader and/or the posted schedule outside of the Radisson Hotel Ballroom for any changes or updates to your daily schedule.